TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

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Betraying Gaza
Egypt as Rent Boy
By Yvonne Ridley

The activities of the rent boys who parade up and down Al-Shawarby Street in Cairo provide a good metaphor for the relationship the Egyptian government has with Israel and the U.S.A., shameless and ruthless, prepared to do whatever it takes to please ... in order to secure a fistful of dollars.

But at least the man whores of Al Shawarby are honest about their trade, as they eagerly hustle potential customers. Yes, they are shameless, but so is the Egyptian government as it continues to enforce the brutal siege in Gaza for Israel's pleasure and America's dollars.

The tears the government sheds for the besieged people of Gaza are crocodilian, and today the government stands before its people completely naked, without honor, as the last fig leaf of decency floats despairingly to the ground.

I make this rather crude analogy as I sit in my hotel room, overlooking the River Nile. The view is breathtaking and just 50 yards away is the Egyptian Museum, which reveals a rich history of a once great country.

The buildings around are decrepit, rundown like much of the country. As of the end of December, I am one of 1,400 peace activists from across the world trapped in Cairo, unable to move forward to take part in the Gaza Freedom March planned for New Year's Day. Most of us answered the rallying call of the U.S. peace activist group Code Pink.

Meanwhile, another shameful drama is unfolding just a few hundred miles away as life-long Palestinian supporter George Galloway sits trapped in the port of Aqaba, as his *Viva Palestina* convoy has been stopped from moving forward.

The British MP's convoy of 250 vehicles and hundreds more supporters has been prevented from leaving Jordan with

RIDLEY CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

2010:
Is The Future Behind Us?
By Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair

What lies ahead politically in 2010? Look for an answer back in the Nineties. Even if the Republicans don't take over in two years, the Democratic Party now in Congress is dominated by politicians fashioned in the Clinton era, nourished by such heirs of Aristotle as Rahm Emanuel and, before him, Tony Coelho. Their maps had simple precepts and coordinates. Barring a few yaps, the left will put up with anything and stay loyal to the Democratic Party and Obama. As for corporate America, extend a welcoming hand to the campaign contributions and click your heels.

Progressive outfits tend to use the current cuss word of the left, "Blue Dog," to mean a faction of Democrats from rural districts who were elected where Obams lost in November 2008. The old meaning and more reliable of "Blue Dog" – pro-business, pro-military – extends much further than a mere bloc to well over 90 per cent of the entire Congressional crew of Democrats.

There is a fantasy that next year may get better for progressives: that Obama, fearful of Republican takeover in the midterm elections, will need to rally the progressive vote, which will mean making some effort to cater to their agenda – Card check, Don't ask, don't tell, a second stimulus package, financial reform regarding credit cards and foreclosures, an end to warrantless wiretaps and renditions, a renegotiation of NAFTA, replacing fast-track trade authority. Such hopes are vain. This year was as good as it gets; next year will be worse.

Take a bellwether like Paul Krugman, a hero to the left for much of the year because of his fierce attacks on Obama's bailout for banks, onslaughts on the economic stimulus for not being big enough, sharp words for sellouts on health reform. But on Christmas Day Krugman gave the White House a gift it had surely not even dared to dream of – a measured instruction to his audience of progressives that the Senate's health bill, although markedly short of alluring features, was nonetheless a big step forward for America, that the lives of millions would be changed for the better and that the left had better remember that politics is the art of the possible. "Imperfect as it is," Krugman wrote, "the legislation that passed the Senate on Thursday and will probably, in a slightly modified version, soon become law will make America a much better country ... And for all its flaws and limitations, it's a great achievement. It will provide real, concrete help to tens of millions of Americans and greater security to everyone."

One can imagine Rahm Emanuel ecstatically phoning his boss in Hawai'i with the news that a crucial imprimatur had come through.

If Krugman can swallow the Senate's health bill, it is yet another proof – if any were needed – that progressives can swallow anything. (In case you do require further proof, John Nichols of the *Nation* watched Obama's peace prize acceptance speech in Oslo in which the laureate declared that war is the moral equivalent of peace, and immediately dispatched a bulletin to readers of the *Nation* website that this was "a glimpse of Obama at his best ... the speech was important and, dare we say, hopeful.")

In fact, the ghastly health bill, which consumed and wasted most of 2009, was in itself a relict of Clinton time. Obama's political cowardice in refusing to set the health reform agenda himself

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and, instead, ceding the initiative to the Senate inevitably meant that the parameters would be set in negotiations between the most conservative Democratic senators and Rahm Emanuel, along with other Clinton-era White House staffers. Emanuel led negotiations on the administration side, not Biden. What we seem to be ending up with is a bill that has the worst elements of Hillary's '93 bill, as reconfigured during her 2008 campaign.

We see Clintonism on the foreign side too. Richard Holbrooke runs the hawkish policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Hillary commits herself to be at the heart of a Camp David-type peace initiative on the Middle East over the next year. Any deal is going to be contingent on really harsh sanctions against Iran.

As for a second stimulus, or increased infrastructural spending, the progressives can dream on. Obama has committed himself, just as Clinton did, to deficit reduction. He's pledged to have all outlays for his stepped up wars in the Afghan theater on the books, not concealed as in Bush time, which will be another stick against outlays for stimulus, etc. Now watch Obama launch his attack on "bloated entitlement programs" – like Social Security. This too he promised to the *Washington Post* a year ago.

What kind of resistance will there be? Organized labor swallowed the death of card check with scarcely a whimper and its performance in the health care fight was scarcely robust. AFL-CIO chief Richard Trumka's vow to fight to death the excision of a public option and the taxing of union health care plans hangs in the air, unconsummated.

If labor didn't show for those two fights, what will rally them to the political barricades?

As for the anti-war movement, it swallowed Obama in his 2008 campaign pledging war in Afghanistan. Since Obama's West Point speech, there has been little in the way of impressive public demonstrations. Of course we dare to hope, but the auguries are not encouraging. **CP**

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Top Ten Reasons to Kill the Senate Health Care Bill

CounterPuncher Chuck Spinney sends us this note:

I got this from a friend who works on budget issues in Congress. If true, this list would explain Insurance stock just rose to all time highs.

- Forces you to pay up to 8% of your income to private insurance corporations – whether you want to or not.
- If you refuse to buy the insurance, you'll have to pay penalties of up to 2% of your annual income to the IRS.
- Many will be forced to buy poor-quality insurance they can't afford to use, with $11,900 in annual out-of-pocket expenses over and above their annual premiums.
- Massive restriction on a woman's right to choose, designed to trigger a challenge to *Roe v. Wade* in the Supreme Court.
- Paid for by taxes on the middle-class insurance plan you have right now through your employer, causing them to cut back benefits and increase copays.
- Many of the taxes to pay for the bill start now, but most Americans won't see any benefits – like an end to discrimination against those with preexisting conditions – until 2014, when the program begins.
- Allows insurance companies to charge people who are older 300% more than others.
- Grants monopolies to drug companies that will keep generic versions of expensive biotech drugs from ever coming to market.
- No re-importation of prescription drugs, which would save consumers $100 billion over 10 years.
- The cost of medical care will continue to rise, and insurance premiums for a family of four will rise an average of $1,000 a year – meaning, in 10 years, your family's insurance premium will be $10,000 more annually than it is right now.

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What Cuba Faces Now

By Saul Landau

Five Cuban intelligence agents sit in federal penitentiaries across the United States because they infiltrated anti-revolutionary groups in Miami intent on doing violence in Cuba. These five men represent a long line of those who have acted from an understanding of their roles in the protracted human historical drama. The Cuban Revolution did for radical youth of the 1950s what the Bolsheviks did for their youth decades before. You could play a role in history and see the results. And in the early stages they looked very good. The more cautious Mensheviks and the more radical Bolsheviks agreed that it was absurd to think of building socialism in one country. In 1917, attempts to duplicate the overthrow of capitalism failed in Europe, but socialism did develop in the largest landmass in the world. The Soviet Union endured as a painfully inefficient state-directed economy for some 70 years before it imploded.

In 1959, Cuban leaders echoed similar sentiments. A revolution on one island? The actions of guerrillas of the mountains and the underground were rooted in a larger revolutionary context – one supplied by Bolívar, O'Higgins and the other Latin American liberators. Cuba began to "export" revolution – at least ideas of revolution – to Caribbean islands and to the South and Central American countries as well.

By 1960, given the predictable response of Washington to any sort of disobedience, Cuba had taken its first steps toward partnership with the no longer revolutionary Soviet Union. In doing so, it got caught in the seamy fabric of the Cold War. Fidel learned of the revolution's "junior" status during the 1962 missile crisis, when Soviet Premier Khrushchev neglected to inform Cuba's leader of his decision to withdraw the missiles. But what other major power would have written a comprehensive insurance policy for the island?

By the early 1970s, after failing to achieve a 10-million-ton sugar harvest to gain extra foreign currency, Cuba had little choice but to adopt Soviet models in return for guaranteed aid and advantageous trade. Its graduates returned with advanced degrees, its population became literate, skilled and healthy, and, in 1975, its soldiers showed how a small island nation could play a strategic role in helping maintain the fragile independence of Angola. Twelve years later, Cuban troops helped liberate Namibia and South Africa by routing the apartheid army in the battles of Cuito Cuanavale.

In the 1970s, Vietnam won its independence, as did Laos. In Africa, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau joined Angola in freeing themselves from Portuguese rule. Nicaragua and then tiny Grenada joined the revolutionary coterie. But in the early 1980s the empire began to reverse revolutionary success, and the USSR began its steep decline. The Sandinistas could not contain the U.S.-backed Contra forces, and Grenada's revolution decomposed in its own inner circles. The ultraleft cabal that murdered Maurice Bishop, its leader, opened the door to a U.S. invasion in 1982.

The media don't understand Cuba, nor do they try. Understandably, U.S. public opinion remains murky on the subject. How did Fidel remain in power for nearly half a century? For one thing, the United States imported his opposition.

By the mid-1980s, the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions had already begun to morph into capitalist economies, run by Communist parties claiming adherence to socialism. Cuban socialism, however, refused to compromise its basic principles. Now, having survived the unflagging hostility of the world's most dangerous and most capitalist neighbor, the United States, and Soviet collapse, Cuba's basic model persists; indeed, it underwent a smooth transition in February 2008, when its National Assembly chose Raúl as the new president to replace a convalescing Fidel.

In the Special Period that followed the demise of the Soviet Union, Cubans had to violate basic ethical tenets in order to survive. By 1991, the state could no longer guarantee an adequate diet for all citizens or maintain other subsidies, as Cuban foreign trade plunged by 70 per cent and standards of living fell. Buying and selling illegally to get certain goods became daily behavior patterns, hardly a stimulant for maintaining high socialist morale.

Cuba legalized the dollar and adopted foreign tourism as its dubious money earner. As it did so, the gang of violent, Florida-based exiles attacked tourist sites and, in one of the hotel bombings in Cuba, killed an Italian tourist.

Since the U.S. government did nothing to stop the terror attacks, Cuba sent its agents to Miami disguised as defectors (the five now imprisoned, plus twelve others) to discover the attack plans of groups like Brothers to the Rescue and Alpha 66. Even after Cuba had passed on to the FBI material gathered by its infiltrators, the Bureau busted the sources – the five – not the perps. The men were convicted and sentenced to long terms.

The media don't understand Cuba, nor do they try. Understandably, U.S. public opinion remains murky on the subject. How did Fidel remain in power for nearly half a century? For one thing, the United States willingly imported his opposition and continues to do so. Current U.S. policy directs its officials to cultivate dissidents in Cuba for the purpose of destabilizing the regime, but Washington then grants these supposed troublemakers visas to join the exile ranks in the United States. Washington shares with the violent exiles an obsession with one person that makes it difficult to think clearly. Facts rarely enter policy discussions.

Studied ignorance has contributed to vociferous rhetoric and policies, such as limiting travel to Cuba for Cuban Americans, that make little sense, except for the small hard-line Cuban exile gang in South Florida, whose families have left the island. U.S. ineptitude, however, does not solve Cuba's problems. Aging Cuban revolutionaries, no matter how frustrated by the vicissitudes of daily life, can boast about accomplishing their goals. Cuba won its independence and has defended its revolution over 50 years against constant U.S. aggression. Cuba established a system of social justice and rights – the right to eat and to have housing, medical

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care, education, etc. Cubans danced on the world stage as liberators of parts of Africa, slayers of the Monroe Doctrine, and purveyors of emergency medical teams that saved Pakistanis, Hondurans, and many others from the aftereffects of natural disaster. Cuban doctors rescued the vision of countless Third World people. Cuban artists, athletes and scientists have etched their names on honor rolls throughout the world.

However, those who do not land good jobs, despite possessing good education, high skill levels and good health, feel they deserve more. Over the past decade, I've met dozens of Cuban youths who shrug and claim: "I don't see much future for myself here." This is a sign of sagging morale. Cuba also faces a dramatic shortage of teachers (8,000 officially) and an agricultural system that cannot yield enough food to meet the government's commitments for each citizen's ration book allocation. Indeed, Cuba had to import a good percentage of its food needs from the United States. The terrible hurricanes of 2008 have exacerbated this situation. In addition, Cuba's wage structure does not reflect productivity or even fairness.

To offer younger generations that sense of optimism that frames the future as bright opportunity rather than dark uncertainty, Raúl Castro has initiated a reform process including democratizing the party itself, recognizing the need to reflect diverse opinions. He has promised to address the multiple issues that have gone unattended. He will need to mobilize younger Cubans in the task of discussing and solving Cuba's pressing problems, which will be difficult. He has surrounded himself with old comrades in their mid-70s or older. Men like Machado Ventura or Ramiro Valdez have earned reputations for being less than flexible. The government will likely enjoy a windfall of oil revenues in the near future from reserves discovered off Cuba's coast. Money does not, however, provide the cure for low morale among sectors of Cuba's youth. And even though an Obama administration might ease some of the imperial pressures on the island, Cuba will still need help from around the world to stem overactive imperial impulses to punish disobedience. **CP**

Saul Landau's *A Bush and Botox World* was published by CounterPunch / AK Press.

Resuscitating the debate over education

From Dewey and Lippmann to Today's Neoliberal Onslaughts on Public Schools

By Danny Weil

During the early 20th century, not all activists and public policy makers were enthralled with the functionalism proposed and implemented in the early industrial schools. John Dewey, a prominent progressive educator and philosopher during the early part of the twentieth century, proposed a more serious democratic form of education. Dewey argued against reducing schooling to mere functionalism – boring and repetitive tasks designed to prepare students for future work under capitalist relations – just as many educators today argue against standardized testing. Dewey's argument against social functionalism was that the role and purpose behind education should be to prepare students to live fully in the present, not simply to prepare them for the future.

The horrifying "Race to the Top" fund, spearheaded by leaders like Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and his philanthropic billionaire cronies, must be challenged with a clear set of ethics and values.

Dewey argued that for schooling to be merely a preparatory institution for future market needs rendered schools and schooling dehumanizing and denied children the opportunity to find relevancy, identity, and meaning in their lives. Dewey wrote, in *Education Today:*

"The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything."

Walter Lippmann did not agree. He was a journalist and contemporary of John Dewey, as well as a speechwriter for presidents. In the 1920s, Lippmann was in his mere 20s while Dewey was in his 60s. Lippmann promoted, like many of his heirs do today, an idea grounded in the imposition of social governance by intellectual managerial elites. These autocratic elites would administer or govern society by applying scientific management to democracy in an effort to maintain orderly control, something Lippmann was thoroughly convinced the public could not achieve. This is the clarion call we hear today from Bill Gates, the Walton Family, Ely Broad and other neofunctionalists, busy revamping education in the reflective image of corporate capitalism. Of course, in such a society there would be little need for citizenship education. Lippmann's view of education can be summed up in his book *The Phantom Public*, where he declares:

"The usual appeal to education can bring only disappointment. For the problems of the modern world appear and change faster than any set of teachers can grasp them, much faster than they can convey their substance to a population of children. If the schools attempt to teach children how to solve the problems of the day, they are bound always to be in arrears. The most they can conceivably attempt is a teaching of a pattern of thought and feeling which will enable the citizen to approach a new problem in some useful fashion. But that pattern cannot be invented by the pedagogue. It is the political theorist's business to trace out that pattern. In that task he must not assume that the mass has political genius, but that men, even if they had genius, would give only a little time to public affairs."

Disagreeing vehemently with

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Lippmann, Dewey argued that class divisions in society were really the culprit and, by implication, contrary to an ethic of rationality one he felt so necessary to carry out the public interest. For Dewey, democracy was a system designed for people to develop their maximum potential, and this meant that they would need to be educated as a democratic citizenry capable of the management of their affairs.

Dewey was convinced that democracy was not a "thing" that is found, but an idea that is perpetually created, and that if given the correct social relations, citizen education and access to basic needs, people not only could but would learn to govern and manage their affairs in the interest of democracy. His notion of education rested upon a citizenry concerned with developing the ability to visualize the type of society its members wished to live in and then working collaboratively to create it. Lippmann, on the other hand, disagreed, notably arguing that the forces of technology along with censorship and social segregation and social isolation as a result of the industrialized capitalism of his time had so summarily distorted the perceptions of what is deemed "the public", that to allow such an unbridled herd to participate in democracy would be tragic if not farcical.

Although the debates between progressive educators like Dewey and Lippmann were intense and controversial, in the end, functionalism triumphed over progressivism. There are many reasons for the triumph of social functionalism in the educational debates in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century, not the least being the cost of subsidizing and operating public education as an enterprise. Progressive educational ideas arguably would have required new structural configurations of schools, an emphasis on quality education as opposed to educating quantities of students, new assessments, and more creative and innovative curricula. Social functionalist approaches to education, on the other hand, were less expensive precisely because within the factory style of school, students could be "produced" through formulas on an educational assembly line in much larger numbers than the painstaking craftsmanship required by progressive education. Education was far more efficient, it was argued, when it was reduced to an ecumenical formula.

The importance of this history cannot go unnoticed when we examine the neoliberal, neofunctionalist educational movement. So much of the innovation neofunctionalists claim to be breeding, and that is uncritically touted by the media, is really a hyper or superfunctionalist approach to education. The new charter schools and "portfolio" schools themselves are wedded to legal state-mandated tests that give them little wiggle room for a curriculum that is not geared toward the needs of standardized testing. Couple this with the for-profit management of many of these schools and we can see how the ideological underpinnings of an education tied to superfunctionalism also translates neatly into business plans of for-profit charter schools. Basically, superfunctionalism is cheaper, less expensive to develop, can be commodified easily into standardized approaches and practices, and it then can be taught for delivery purpose to teacher-managers responsible for its execution. Done well, charter schools and other neoliberal approaches to education can then be set up as franchise schools, accounting procedures developed and profits made for investors through the standardization of the whole "school package."

For progressives, it is Dewey's ideal that we must foster: an ideal of education as democratic-citizenship education, not an insipid education based on crass individualism and elite class interests.

Perhaps even more important, the progressive agenda for education at the time of the Dewey-Lippmann debates was highly controversial and threatened the managerial elite agenda of control and power that, as Lippmann noted and helped advance ideologically, was beginning to take shape in an industrialized, modern America. With the emergence of union activism, independent socialist movements – coupled with the creation of the former Soviet Union in 1917 and the so-called Red scare and the Sacco and Vanzetti trial of the 1920s – the last thing that policymakers in education, business, or politics wanted was education for social liberation and individual realization. Businessmen, policymakers, and politicians were worried that opening up education to such things as personal awareness, democracy, social exploration and personal development, along with critical analysis, might compel the public to examine the social, cultural and economic relations that governed their lives.

Such a result had the possibility of posing a considerable threat to power, authority, and elite control of social affairs and was of little interest to the captains of an industry and a market society undergoing a huge economic expansion, technological revolution, rising industrialization, and an unprecedented creation and concentration of wealth and industry. Their notion of education for social function and control was far more pragmatic in an emerging industrial world in which commercialism relied on disciplined workers and irresponsible consumers subject to the perception management and "manufactured consent" admonished, yet implicitly advocated, by Lippmann. As a result, Dewey's progressive ideas had little support from administrators and other educational policymakers, unlike Lippmann's liberal elitism of the times, which was heartily embraced by the aristocracy, the business class and the then contemporary elite managerial class.

With charter schools, predatory private colleges, the dismantling of public education and a host of other neoliberal approaches to privatizing education and destroying teacher unions, the debate over the purpose of education and neofunctionalism must now be debated with even more rigor. Educators and progressive citizens along with teacher unions must now turn their heads to this historical tragedy that is playing itself out once again in the landscape of public educational demolition. It is time to resuscitate the John Dewey-Walter Lippmann debates of the 1920s and begin to counter neoliberal educational agenda with arguments based on moral claims to citizenship education, democracy and freedom.

For too long the arguments have been centered on a narrow definition of what it means to be an educated person in today's society. What is paramount now is the grounding of any argument for educational reform within moral values such

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as solidarity, an appreciation for diversity, the need for equitable opportunities for all children to succeed, as well as the necessity for participation in the power structures that determine teachers, student and working people's lives. Casting the educational debate within the realm of ethics and values allows for progressive ideas regarding public education to confront head on the values and morals of utilitarian market education, which sees students, teachers and their families as little more than a means to an end.

The horrifying "Race to the Top" fund, spearheaded by leaders like Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and his entrepreneurial and philanthropic billionaire cronies, must be challenged with a clear set of ethics and values that can then be used to formulate public policy as it relates to universal, meaningful and responsible education for citizenship development and the revival of democracy. This is a debate that we, as citizens, educators and students, simply must have and that we simply cannot afford to lose.

As Jack Gerson and Steven Miller, two high-school teachers and long-time activists in the Oakland Unified School District, argued in 2007, "Tough Choices or Tough Times," put out by the Skills Commission and heavily funded by Bill Gates and other philanthro-capitalists in December 2006, calls for, among other things: making all public schools into something beyond charter schools, something called "Contract Schools"; ending high school for many students after the 10th grade; ending teacher pension plans and cutting back on teacher health benefits; introducing merit pay and other pay differentials for teachers; eliminating the powers of local school boards, with the "public" schools to be owned by private companies and all regulation done by them.

Some of the talking points in the report include moving beyond charter schools to privatized contract schools and eliminating high school. No longer are charter schools even discussed as engines of innovation to raise educational standards and practices in traditional public schools. On the contrary, agreeing with the "Education Next" report, put out by the Hudson Institute, "Tough Choices or Tough Times" implicitly concurs that charter schools are simply Trojan horses for what entrepreneurs and investors really want, which is the privatization of all public schools for lucrative profits and standardization of both curriculum and its delivery. This, of course, will and has required mayoral control and the elimination of all school board powers, citizen groups and all regulations in favor of empowering private companies to create a new "school system," both in governance, curriculum and oversight.

What will be the role of the state in this new arbitrage of privatization? In the words of the report:

"First, the role of school boards would change. Schools would no longer be owned by local school districts. Instead, schools would be operated by independent contractors, many of them limited-

Students testing poorly on the mandated tests could go on to "vocational" schools or prisons or the military, while those who did well would be channeled into the corridors of power through the colleges or universities.

liability corporations owned and run by teachers. The primary role of school district central offices would be to write performance contracts with the operators of these schools, monitor their operations, cancel or decide not to renew the contracts of those providers that did not perform well, and find others that could do better. The local boards would also be responsible for collecting a wide range of data from the operators specified by the state, verifying these data, forwarding them to the state, and sharing them with the public and with parents of children in the schools. They would also be responsible for connecting the schools to a wide range of social services in the community, a function made easier in those cases in which the mayor is responsible for both those services and the schools. The contract schools would be public schools, subject to all of the safety, curriculum, testing, and other accountability requirements of public schools. The teachers in these schools would be employees of the state, as previously noted." ("Tough Choices or Tough Times", 2007).

"Tough Choices or Tough Times" even goes so far as to recommend ending high school for many poor and minority students after the 10th grade, such as those who score poorly on standardized tests intended for high-school seniors. Students testing poorly on the mandated tests could go on to "vocational" schools or prisons or the military, while those who did well would be channeled into the corridors of power through the colleges or universities. Listen to the tune of the billionaire songbird:

"Our first step is creating a set of Board Examinations. States will have their own Board Examinations, and some national and even international organizations will offer their own. A Board Exam is an exam in a set of core subjects that is based on a syllabus provided by the Board. So the point of the exam is to find out whether the student has learned from the course what he or she was supposed to learn. For most students, the first Board Exam will come at the end of 10th grade. A few might take it earlier — some might not succeed on their first try, so they might take another year to two to succeed. The standards will be set at the expectations incorporated in the exams given by the countries that do the best job educating their students."

Also suggested in the report is ending remediation and special education aid for low-performance students in an effort to cut costs. We already see this happening now in many major cities. Furthermore, the report is clear on the need for ending teacher pensions and reducing their health and other benefits. The idea is not to motivate teachers to create innovation; on the contrary, teachers are now to be once again "trained" in the "best practices" to deliver predetermined curricula and held to "standards" that the new system now imposes. This is hauntingly familiar to demands currently imposed on students and teachers – to be "trained" to meet what many teachers feel are inauthentic state mandatory standards, ill-designed to motivate or create citizenship education for the 21st century.

"Tough Choices or Tough Times" also points the accusatory finger of blame for educational malaise at teachers, recommending that unions be reduced and/or eliminated. The report also urges ending teacher seniority and introducing competition among teachers through devices

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such as merit pay and other teacher differentials based on student performance on standardized tests.

The report is a summary, or playbook, for what actually is going on in American education right now. The transformation of public schools into private entities is gradually being implemented and accomplished as the capitalist, neoliberal agenda makes its ascendancy in economically strapped and often bankrupt urban centers throughout the nation.

It is easy to see the parallel between the age of the Lippmann-Dewey debate and today. Although contemporary production has shifted to technological, finance and service work, as the United States enters into the "third wave," or postindustrialism, infatuation with technological tycoons, cybernet billionaires and the ideology of efficiency, "lean production" and "best practices" now dominates the country's culture. School-to-work programs are important aspects of many public schools, and have arisen partly in response to the demands of the new social functionalism, or what can be termed neofunctionalism, and the proclaimed need to prepare students for the exigencies of production in the twenty-first century.

The social functionalism prevalent in the philosophy of early twentieth-century educational discourse, along with a preoccupation for speed and efficiency, was vividly described by the then-leading reformer Franklin Bobbitt, one of the key social functionalists for the school restructuring movement during the industrial age. Here's Bobbitt writing in 1913, aping the time and motion schedules set forth by that exponent of proper use of time in industrial production – all part of the cult of efficiency:

"The third-grade teacher should bring her pupils up to an average of 26 correct combinations in addition per minute. The fourth-grade teacher has the task, during the year that the same pupils are under her care, of increasing their addition speed from an average of 26 combinations per minute to an average of 34 combinations per minute. If she does not bring them up to the standard 34, she has failed to perform her duty in proportion to the deficit; and there is no responsibility beyond the standard."

The reconfiguration of the school day and the redesign of curriculum during the industrial revolution in the early part of the twentieth century helped shape what we now know as the large, factory-style urban public school and the public school curriculum. The appeal to link school to work is not much different than positions taken by certain educational policymakers and business leaders today.

The arguments between Dewey and Lippmann and a host of educational functionalists, elitists and educational progressives are as heated today as they were in the beginning of the twentieth century, perhaps even more so. The issues that confronted educators in the early twentieth century – curriculum construction, access to quality education, the education of minority children and newly arriving immigrants, race, gender equity, social class, market capitalism, technological innovation, work, efficiency and production, and the purpose and goals of education – represent similar but different challenges, much as they did close to 100 years ago. However, now with the rise of new technologies like television, radio, and the Internet (to name a few), Lippmann's ideas of an irrational public not only resonate loudly, but arguably serve as an even a greater warning regarding the power of a small corporate elite to control or "manufacture the consent" of the public through private ownership of the means of communication.

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If Lippmann was alive today, he would most likely argue that the opportunities for elite control of the public mind are more prevalent in our contemporary society as they ever were, and, thus, the role of education should be one of domestication, because for Lippmann people are simply incapable of carrying out the civic duties required by democratic life.

Dewey, on the other hand, would continue to argue, as many progressive educators do today, that functionalism is not just deadening to teaching and learning, but he would also argue against the agenda of capital as expressed in its current stage of neoliberalism and the struggle to privatize everything public, most notably education, as well as to colonize the mind. For progressives, it is Dewey's ideal that we must foster: an ideal of education as democratic-citizenship education, not an insipid education based on crass individualism and elite class interests, orchestrated by the billionaire philanthrocapitalists and their managerial classes. **CP**

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RIDLEY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

its much needed aid. Why? Because America and Israel have told Egypt not to let a single vehicle or peace activist pass through its country to the Rafah border and in to Gaza, where an entire population is suffering beyond belief and, it seems, beyond humanitarian relief.

So, why doesn't Egypt tell Washington and Tel Aviv to get stuffed? For exactly the same reason a rent boy will do as his master tells him ... hard cash. Proof? Exactly two years ago, under the Bush administration, both houses of U.S. Congress agreed to withhold 100 million dollars in financial assistance to Egypt, following Israeli claims that Egyptian authorities were failing to prevent weapons smuggling to the Gaza Strip. Egypt receives nearly two billion dollars in U.S. aid, making it the second largest recipient of U.S. largesse after Israel, which receives three billion dollars a year in military assistance.

And now the Middle East's most active rent boy has a new master pimp – Barack Obama. Not exactly new in truth. White House enforcers have made sure the same house rules apply. Now, while the Egyptian government might bend over backwards – or just bend over – the real enforcers will find *Viva Palestina* and the Gaza Freedom Marchers less compliant.

We have traveled from more than 40 different countries to Cairo, while others have driven thousands of miles to Aqaba to show our solidarity to the people of Gaza – we represent the largest gathering of international solidarity activists in the history of the Middle East.

So, why doesn't Egypt tell Washington and Tel Aviv to get stuffed? For exactly the same reason a rent boy will do as his master tells him ... hard cash.

Using the pretext of escalating tensions on the Gaza-Egypt border, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said that the Rafah border will be closed over the coming weeks. Our message to the politicians is crystal clear: "Let us enter Gaza and let the Gaza Freedom March proceed."

Quite simply, you cannot buy us. Integrity, freedom and our love for Gaza are not for sale at any price. Egyptian security goons have already used fear and intimidation on the management of the venues the Gaza Freedom Marchers have booked, as well as transport companies, which contracted buses to carry us from Cairo to Gaza, with the result that these deals have been canceled.

Egyptian Security even tried to pressure the management of the Groppi coffee shop on Midan Talaat Harb to shut it down while we were organizing meetings. Despite warning us that more than six people cannot gather in public places, our meeting continued. Where injustice is the law resistance is our duty.

As Malcolm X once said, "Power in defense of freedom is greater than power on behalf of tyranny and oppression." **CP**

Yvonne Ridley is a British journalist, traveling with Indy filmmaker Warren Biggs, making a documentary about the Gaza Freedom March. She is a founder member of *Viva Palestina* and a member of the U.K.'s RESPECT Party.

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